

Medications for PTSD and related symptoms

What the experts have to say



Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program

William S. Middleton VA Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace
Madison, WI 53705
608-280-7084

What can people do to get better?

- ◆ Two types of treatment are helpful: psychotherapy and medication.
- ◆ For some people, psychotherapy alone or medication alone is enough.
- ◆ For others a combination of the two is the best approach.



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How would someone decide that?

- ◆ Discuss this with your health care provider.
- ◆ In general, psychotherapy alone may be best for you if your symptoms are milder or if you prefer not to, or should not take medications due to pregnancy or a medical condition.



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When is medication needed?

- ◆ If your symptoms are severe or have lasted a long time
- ◆ If you have another mental health problem, such as depression or anxiety, that is making it hard for you to recover
- ◆ If you are thinking about suicide
- ◆ If you are having major problems functioning
- ◆ If psychotherapy alone hasn't worked



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Medication treatment

- ◆ No medication has been shown to fully treat all PTSD symptoms. However, two of the newer antidepressants have proven effective in reducing enough of the core symptoms of PTSD to receive FDA approval for PTSD treatment.
- ◆ Treating coexisting psychiatric conditions that are responsive to medications, particularly depression, can be very helpful with enhancing coping with PTSD.



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Sequencing and combining medications

- ◆ Since an antidepressant will frequently only partially treat symptoms, clinicians will work with individual patients around medications that might be added to gain better symptom control.
- ◆ The first step is identifying which symptoms of PTSD are the most bothersome to the functioning of the individual. For example, some patients most want improved sleep while others want more relief from their daytime overall tension.



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More about combining medications

The medical literature does cite case examples of numerous medications that on an individual basis might be beneficial. Clinicians work individually with patients to try to add medications that are effective in treating targeted symptoms while trying to minimize side effects.



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Examples of medications to treat symptoms of PTSD include:

- **For sleep**
 - Sedating antidepressants like trazodone
 - Sedating antipsychotics such as quetiapine
 - A sleeping medication such as zolpidem
- **For daytime tension**
 - An anticonvulsant such as gabapentin
 - The blood pressure medication clonidine



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